

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2018

Hon Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

As members of the Bipartisan Heroin Task Force, we urge you to protect the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)'s budget and keep its funding to at least current levels. We ask you to reject any further cuts to ONDCP's funding, prevent reductions to its staff, and keep the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) and Drug-Free Communities (DFC) programs within ONDCP's jurisdiction.

As you know, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that there were more than 63,600 drug overdose deaths in the United States in 2016. The majority of those involved prescription opioids, heroin, or synthetic opioids like fentanyl. We are losing over 170 Americans every day to this crisis.

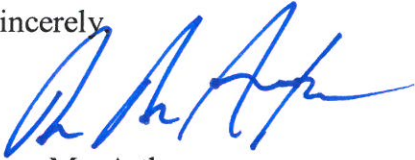
Both the Administration and Members of Congress from both parties have indicated that addressing this epidemic is a matter of highest priority. We believe that a strong ONDCP is a critical component of an effective and aggressive response to the devastation that heroin, opioids, and other drugs are causing in our communities.

ONDCP not only provides indispensable expertise and analysis, it helps develop and coordinate drug policy across the many departments and agencies of the Federal government, including the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), as well as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the CDC and other efforts within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This is a challenging task under any circumstances. Reducing its budget, staff, and role will only harm ONDCP's ability to fulfill this unique and already difficult mission.

In addition, there are HIDTA-designated counties in 49 states, as well as Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. Likewise, the Drug-Free Communities Support program is an important grant program that aims to strengthen collaboration among communities, public agencies, and private non-profit agencies to reduce substance abuse among youth. These programs do an enormous amount of good and we express our strong support for them. We also note that actively managing these programs keeps ONDCP directly engaged with those on the front lines of this fight in a way it might not otherwise be, which greatly enhances the quality of its policy and coordination work. We suggest that report language describing how ONDCP oversight of these programs strengthens the office's mission may be helpful in addressing this question in the future.

We respectfully request that you support the important work being conducted by the ONDCP. Thank you for your consideration.

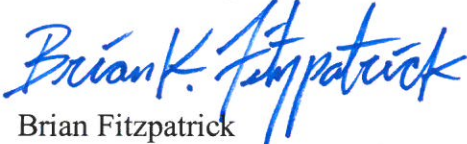
Sincerely,



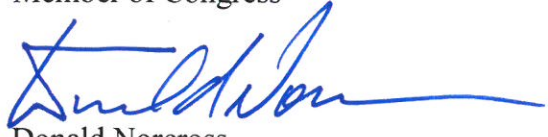
Tom MacArthur
Member of Congress



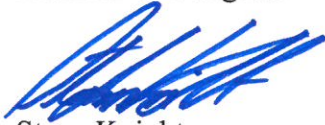
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



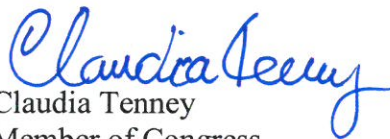
Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Steve Knight
Member of Congress



Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress



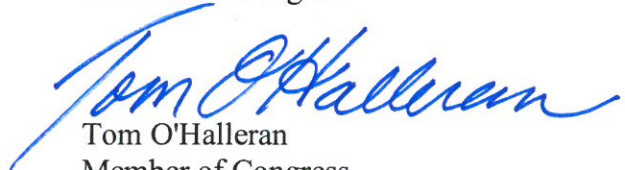
Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress



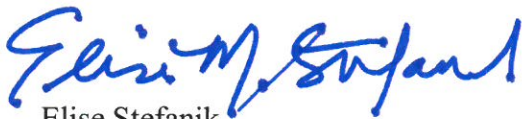
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress



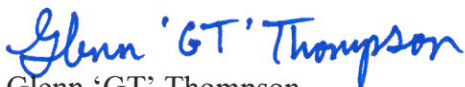
Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



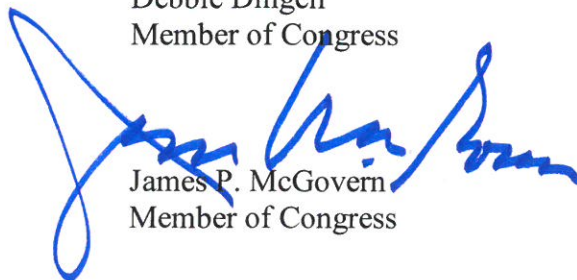
Patrick Meehan
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Glenn 'GT' Thompson
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Joe Courtney

Joe Courtney
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Mark Takano

Mark Takano
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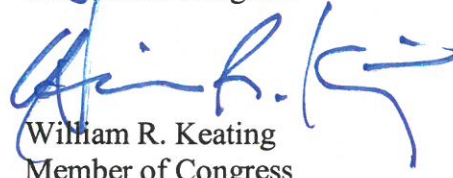
Chellie Pingree

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

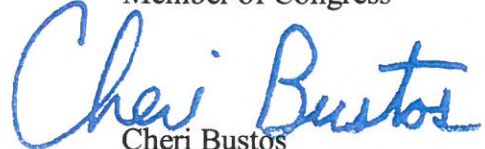

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress


Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

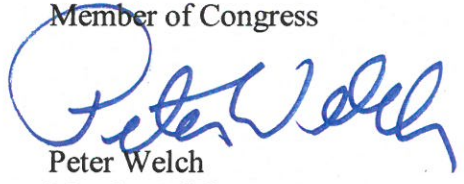

William R. Keating
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Bradley S. Schneider
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress


Peter Welch
Member of Congress


Diana DeGette
Member of Congress


Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

CC:
Hon. Tom Graves, Chairman, House Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
Hon. Mike Quigley, Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on Financial Services and General